



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Roseola

(exanthem subitem, human herpesvirus 6)

What is roseola?

Roseola is a common, generally mild viral illness of young children. It usually occurs in children under 4, mostly between 6 months and 2 years of age. The virus that causes roseola has been identified as Human herpesvirus 6 or 7.

How do you get it?

The virus can be spread by droplets or excretions from nose and/or throat of infected people, most likely from infected people who do not have symptoms. Transmission through organ transplant has also been documented.

What are the symptoms of roseola?

The symptoms include the sudden onset of fever, sometimes as high as 106°F, which lasts for 3 to 7 days. The fever is followed by a rash that lasts for few days. Although the symptoms are generally mild, occasionally, roseola can produce high fever seizures, or other complications. The roseola rash appears as small, discrete (separated) rose-pink spots. In contrast, the rash in measles appears red, raised, and confluent (merged), and lasts for more than 3 days.

When do symptoms start?

The symptoms begin about 10 days (4-15 days) following infection with the virus.

For how long is a person contagious?

The contagious period for roseola is unknown.

What is the treatment for roseola?

There is no specific treatment for roseola. Generally, only supportive care is recommended.

If you get it once can you get it again?

Yes, but it is not common. Roseola in childhood may provide some lasting immunity to the illness.

Should a person with roseola be excluded from work or school?

Yes. Children may go back to school when they have recovered.

How do you keep from getting it?

Effective preventive measures are not known. Frequent handwashing is recommended.